

Rep. Nadler and Advocates Laud Governor Paterson's Leadership

Thursday, 07 August 2008

NEW YORK, NY – Congressman Jerrold Nadler (NY-08), the Northeast region's senior member on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, joined a host of key environmental, labor and transportation groups in applauding Governor David Paterson's leadership and bold agenda for transportation efficiency, environmental justice and economic growth for Long Island and the region, as evidenced by his action on New York State Senate Bill #6728-A.

New York State Senate Bill #6728-A proposed the transfer of Pilgrim State Hospital, in Suffolk County, to the Oak Brush Plain State Preserve, which would have precluded a long-standing plan for the New York State Department of Transportation to construct the Long Island Truck and Rail Inter Modal Facility (LITRIM) on the site. LITRIM is a key component in a regional freight plan to dramatically reduce truck congestion on New York's byways by expanding rail infrastructure and removing trucks from our roads. LITRIM would not only reduce the congestion and noxious pollution affecting Long Island, but would greatly increase economic productivity through a more rationalized system of freight movement within our dense region.

"I want to offer my deep appreciation to Governor Paterson for his veto of New York State Senate Bill #6728-A, which would have conveyed the Pilgrim State Hospital to the Oak Brush Plain State Preserve," said Rep. Nadler. "This difficult and important decision demonstrates the Governor's willingness to keep on the table every possible option in tackling Long Island's very real and pressing transportation problems. Because of the Governor's far-sightedness in the face of immediate concerns, an important conversation on regional transportation efficiency will now be able to proceed."

Rep. Nadler also thanked Assemblyman Phil Ramos for his essential contribution. "Assemblyman Ramos has shown genuine leadership in his work toward solving Long Island's complex transportation problems," Nadler remarked. "In bringing this issue to the fore, the Assemblyman has effectively highlighted the potential traffic impacts on the local community. Thanks to his leadership, we're going to all put our heads together to make sure that that LITRIM does not negatively impact the neighborhood surrounding the site or the Edgewood. And his continued stewardship will be crucial in directing this process and ensuring that we can improve our regional infrastructure in the most environmentally and economically sound manner." Rep. Nadler also expressed his great appreciation to his other colleagues in government – Congressman Steve Israel, Assemblyman Andrew Raia, Suffolk County Executive Steve Levy and Suffolk County Legislator Steve Stern – for their invaluable roles in this process.

preserve
– everything will be on the table.

Environmental, labor and transportation advocates also applauded the Governor's decision.

"This was a difficult decision, but we are deeply grateful that Governor Paterson has made the right choice for Long Island's future," said Marcia Bystryn, president of the New York League of Conservation Voters. "The current way that goods are shipped — and the resulting traffic congestion, poor air quality and higher prices — is exacting an enormous, long-term toll on the environment. The Long Island Truck/Rail InterModal is quite literally the lynchpin to a cleaner, more sustainable future for the region, and we salute Governor Paterson for allowing this project to proceed."

Robert Yaro, president of the Regional Plan Association, noted: "We are gratified that Governor Paterson took this action, preventing passage of a bill which would have permanently blocked the opportunity to build an intermodal facility on this site. It shows that he recognizes the importance of moving toward a more sustainable freight transportation system for Long Island."

Tri-State Transportation Campaign Executive Director, Kate Slevin, said: "It is absolutely key that we, as a region, move toward greater investment in rail freight infrastructure in the interest of removing trucks from our ever-congested roads. An intermodal facility on Long Island will be a tremendous boon to both the environmental and economic good."

Jim Tripp, General Counsel at the Environmental Defense Fund, asserted: "Before the State forecloses the use of this site as an intermodal yard, we need a far more robust discussion of the impact of including this site in the Edgewood Preserve than has taken place around this legislation. Indeed, as far as we have been able to determine, none of the non-profit groups that have been working on improved freight rail knew anything about this bill until the Assembly and Senate passed it."

"It may turn out eventually," Tripp continued, "that the State will decide that major investments to modernize the downstate freight rail system are not cost-effective. While we doubt that that will be the case, eliminating intermodal yard location options such as this site will significantly diminish the likelihood of improved freight rail as a credible option for moving goods regionally."

In a joint statement, Matthew Crosson, President of the Long Island Association, and John Durso, President of the Long Island Federation of Labor (AFL-CIO), said: "We want to thank the Governor for his great leadership on this issue. The LITRIM is being supported by a wide coalition of groups representing business, labor, and environmental organizations... We believe the LITRIM is important to the future of Long Island's economy and it benefits long-term job growth on Long Island."

“The economic value to Long Island,”
Crosson and Durso continued, “will be significant, and it will become even more
significant as the rising price of oil continues to affect the bottom line
costs of all consumer goods. Rail shipments deliver 455 tons of
material/goods per gallon of fuel, compared to truck shipments, which only
deliver 105 tons of material/goods per gallon of fuel.”